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SUBJ: SEMINAR ON CANAL ISSUE: I. INTRODUCTION

REF: PANAMA 6048

SUMMARY. THE THREE-DAY SEMINAR ON CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS SPONSORED BY NATIONAL COUNCIL ON PRIVATE ENTERPRISE (CONEP) WAS ATTENDED BY ABOUT FIFTY PROMINENT PANAMANIAN BUSINESS EXECUTIVES. SOME PARTICIPANTS AND PANELISTS WERE OFFICIALS IN PRE-REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENTS. PAPERS WERE PRESENTED COVERING ALL ASPECTS OF CANAL ISSUE BY GOP OFFICIALS, HISTORIANS, LAWYERS AND PERSONS WHO WERE OFFICIALS OF PRE-REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENTS. GOP CAME UNDER CRITICISM FROM SOME PARTICIPANTS FOR ITS CONDUCT OF NEGOTIATIONS, ESPECIALLY FOR HAVING IMPLICITLY ACCEPTED IN KISSINGER-TACK AGREEMENT A CONTINUING U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE. THE SEMINAR PAPERS WILL BE PUBLISHED IN PANAMA IN SPANISH AND ENGLISH AND DISTRIBUTED BY CONEP MEMBERS WHO TRAVEL TO U.S. TO PUBLICIZE CANAL ISSUE. THIS CABLE IS FIRST OF SEVERAL CONCERNING SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS' TREATMENT OF SPECIFIC

ISSUES OF INTEREST TO U.S. NEGOTIATORS. END SUMMARY.

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1. THREE-DAY SEMINAR SPONSORED BY CONEP FROM OCTOBER 18-20 GAVE INTENSIVE COVERAGE TO ALL ASPECTS OF U.S.-PANAMANIAN RELATIONS AND

CANAL ISSUE. FOREIGN MINISTER TACK SET TONE FOR SEMINAR IN INAUGURAL ADDRESS IN WHICH HE SAID PANAMA HAD BECOME A SOVEREIGN INDEPENDENT STATE ON NOVEMBER 3, 1903 BUT 15 DAYS LATER THE 1903 CANAL CONVENTION, "IMPOSED WITH NEO-COLONIALIST CHARACTERISTICS," HAD FRUSTRATED THAT INDEPENDENCE. PANAMA'S GOAL IS TO COMPLETE ITS INDEPENDENCE AND RECOVER, PROMPTLY, THE CANAL ZONE. PANAMA DESIRES A PANAMANIAN CANAL, MANAGED BY PANAMANIANS. AS FOR THE PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS, HE SAID THEY WERE PROGRESSING.

2 THE FOREIGN MINISTER DEPARTED IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS SPEECH BUT OTHER FONMIN OFFICIALS REMAINED FOR THE GRUELLING 36 HOURS OF SPEECHES, QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND DISCUSSION. THREE PERSONS PRESENTLY CONNECTED WITH THE NEGOTIATIONS - DR. CARLOS LOPEZ GUEVARA, JORGE ILLUECA AND DIOGENES DE LA ROSA - WERE PANELISTS ALONG WITH DR. ROGELIO ALFARO (HISTORIAN AND IBM DIRECTOR), CARLOS IVAN ZUNIGA (NATIONALIST LAWYER AND PRE-1968 POLITICAN), DR. JOSE F. CARDONA MAS (BUSINESSMAN AND UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR), DR. RICARDO LASSO GUEVARA (UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR), MIGUEL MORENO (FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER AND AMBASSADOR TO OAS), DR. CESAR A. QUINTERO (LAW PROFESSOR), LIC. CARLOS BOLIVER PEDRESCHI (LAWYER), GUILLERMO CHAMPMAN (ECONOMIST AND MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT), AND DIOGENES A. ARSOEMENA (BUSINESSMAN AND PRE-1968 POLITICAL). THERE WAS MUCH PARTICIPATION FROM THE FIFTY PERSONS ATTENDING THE SEMINAR. SOME FOREIGN DIPLOMATS ATTENDED PART OF THE TIME. U.S. EMBOFF ATTENDED ALL SESSIONS. POLISH CHARGE DEPARTED FROM SEMINAR AT MIDDAY SUNDAY FOLLOWING A SESSION DURING WHICH POLAND WAS DESCRIBED AS COLONY OF SOVIET UNION.

3. HEATED DISCUSSIONS OCCURRED AS RESULT FRANK PRESENTATION OF DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS ON SUCH ISSUES AS 1967 DRAFT TREATIES, THE DEGREE TO WHICH PANAMA SHOULD COMPROMISE IN PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS, NEUTRALITY ISSUE, U.S. MILITARY BASES, MARTYRS OF 1964, AND PATRIOTISM OF PREVIOUS PANAMANIAN LEADERS WHO NEGOTIATED AND COMPROMISED WITH U.S. NO FORMAL CONCLUSIONS WERE SOUGHT OR REACHED BY THE PARTICIPANTS. EVENTUALLY, THE SEMINAR PAPERS, INCLUDING SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS AND QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR, WILL BE PUBLISHED. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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4. EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER WHO ATTENDED SESSIONS OBSERVED THAT WHILE SOME CONEP MEMBERS CRITIZED GOP FOR HANDLING OF TREATY NEGOTIATIONS, THEY CLEARLY SUPPORTED OVERALL GOALS OF GOP TO ELIMINATE CANAL ZONE AND EVENTUALLY ACHIEVE PANAMANIAN CPUTROL OVER CANAL. SOME CRITICISM WAS DIRECTED AGAINST GOP FOR HAVING CEDED TOO MUCH IN 8 POINT TACK-KISSINGER AGREEMENT. TWO SPEAKERS DEFENDED 1967 DRAFT TREATIES AND CRITICIZED GOP FOR NOT HAVING ACCEPTED THEM. THERE WAS DISCUSSION OF FREEDOM OF PRESS AND EXPRESSION.

ONE PERSON IN SPEECH FROM FLOOR CALLED GOP A "WHITE GLOVED
DICTATORSHIP."

5. COMMENT. AT NO TIME DURING RECENT YEARS HAS THERE BEEN SUCH
WIDE-RANGING DISCUSSION AND OPEN DISCUSSION OF SENSITIVE
CANAL TREATY ISSUES. IT APPEARS THAT GOP OFFICIALS, LOPEZ
GUEVARA ESPECIALLY, ARE SEEKING NATIONAL UNITY BY RESTORING TO
RESPECTABILITY PANAMA'S FOUNDING FATHERS AND YWEVIOUS
TREATY NEGOTIATORS. SEVERAL MESSAGES CONCERNING ASPECTS
OF THE SEMINAR OF RELEVANCE FOR U.S. CANAL TREATY
NEGOTIATORS WILL FOLLOW.
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